

“Transient Places, Future Nostalgia”

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Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art

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I make work about places and spaces that have been impacted by tourism. My hometown of Morehead City, North Carolina is a tourist destination that has been facing economic decline since the 1960's. In various iterations of photography-based work, I examine the decaying buildings and sites that once functioned as places for tourists, such as empty hotels, abandoned pools, half-built structures, and parking lots strewn with debris. I utilize photography by simultaneously using both analog and digital photographs with varying degrees of manipulation to reveal the states of demolition that I find. The current state of disintegration in my hometown reflects the livelihoods that sank with the rest of the tourist industry in many towns like it across the country.

Transient Places, Future Nostalgia is influenced by Lucy Lippard's book, On The Beaten Track. In this text, Lippard examines the economic decline of tourist destinations. She writes, "Travel is the only context in which some people ever look around. If we spent half the energy looking at our own neighborhoods, we'd probably learn twice as much." Since the invention of the camera in 1839, the role of photography has had two significant impacts that are related to my practice. First, the camera has a history of being brought to locations deemed "exotic" in order to document the experience of world travel. Second, the people who are unable to travel have the ability to experience the place through the viewing of the photograph, in lieu of travel. Through the act of looking, I reclaim authority of the narrative of travel destinations by subverting the tourist image.

When I make a photograph, I find myself drawn to materials that could be found at hardware stores. These materials, such as doors, windows, and wood, speak to the foundational construction materials used in architectural development. I use a system of conscious framing that reveals the intimacy of place. It is through this framing that I allow the smaller details of

construction and deconstruction to have their own authority. The acts of looking and documenting drive my practice-I do not look for the idealized tourist image, instead the way in which I photograph these moments operates against the photograph taken in a tourist economy.

In his book, Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes explains that the photograph engages with time, “what will be and has been.” This impossible compression shows the subject of the photograph as dead in accordance of time and concurrently always in the process of dying. The layering of places marked by the absence of human presence is a practice of visually compressing time. When photographing the once popular tourist hotels in Morehead City, I am focused on the moments within an architectural structure that compress and flatten out generations of economic and physical growth and decline. Photography is a tool to consider one’s relationship to place using time and light to define the single moment that is in the limbo of mortality, to create a narrative element which illustrates the cycle of systematic growth and decay of architectural forms local to Morehead City.

I began making collages using images from a Polaroid camera after Hurricane Florence hit the Outer Banks of North Carolina in the Fall of 2018. The analog process produces a singular image, while the cellphone image is digital and reproducible. The singular image is more precious than the reproducible. I manipulate the Polaroid image with careful incisions, doing away with the preciousness of the snapshot. Disassembling and reassembling something new, I examine generations of the cycles of progress, growth, development, and decay.

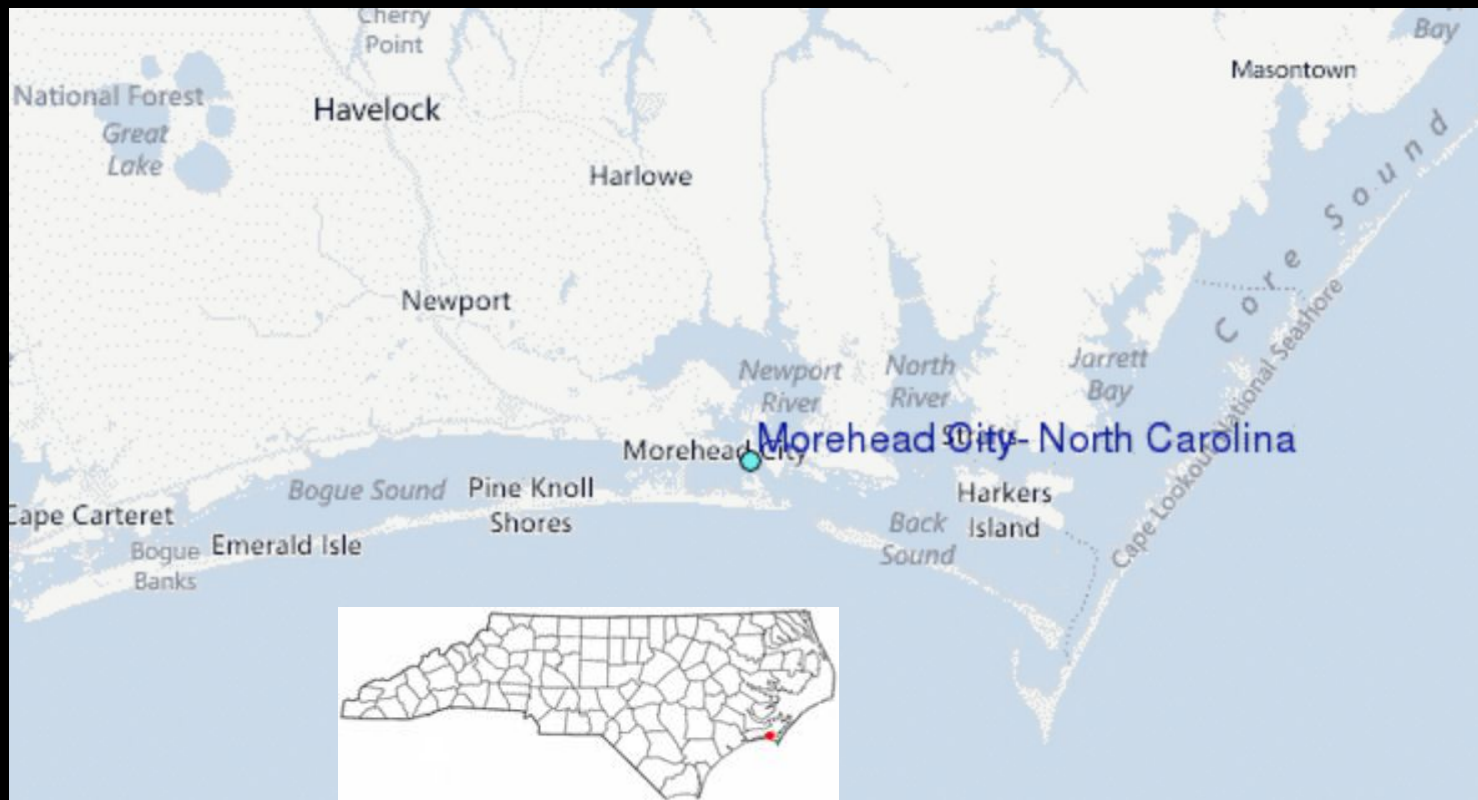
When I make photocollages, I allow damage visible in the photographic image to be revealed within the confines of the collage. When placed on top of each other, the pieces I use create a hierarchy of layers. During the digital editing process, additions are allowed subtly,

thus reviving the landscape and revealing a responsibility or possibility for the place that is ahead of its time.

Using my lens as a local in a tourist destination, I have been able to understand the detriment done to my hometown in efforts to make the economy survive. I am connected by the history of the tourist image and the present essence of the town. My work is a personal and intuitive meditation on architectural development and destruction in tourist cities.

*Transient Places,
Future Nostalgia*

Emily Hobgood Thomas



Map of Morehead City and surrounding area



Downtown Morehead City



Morehead Building Supply



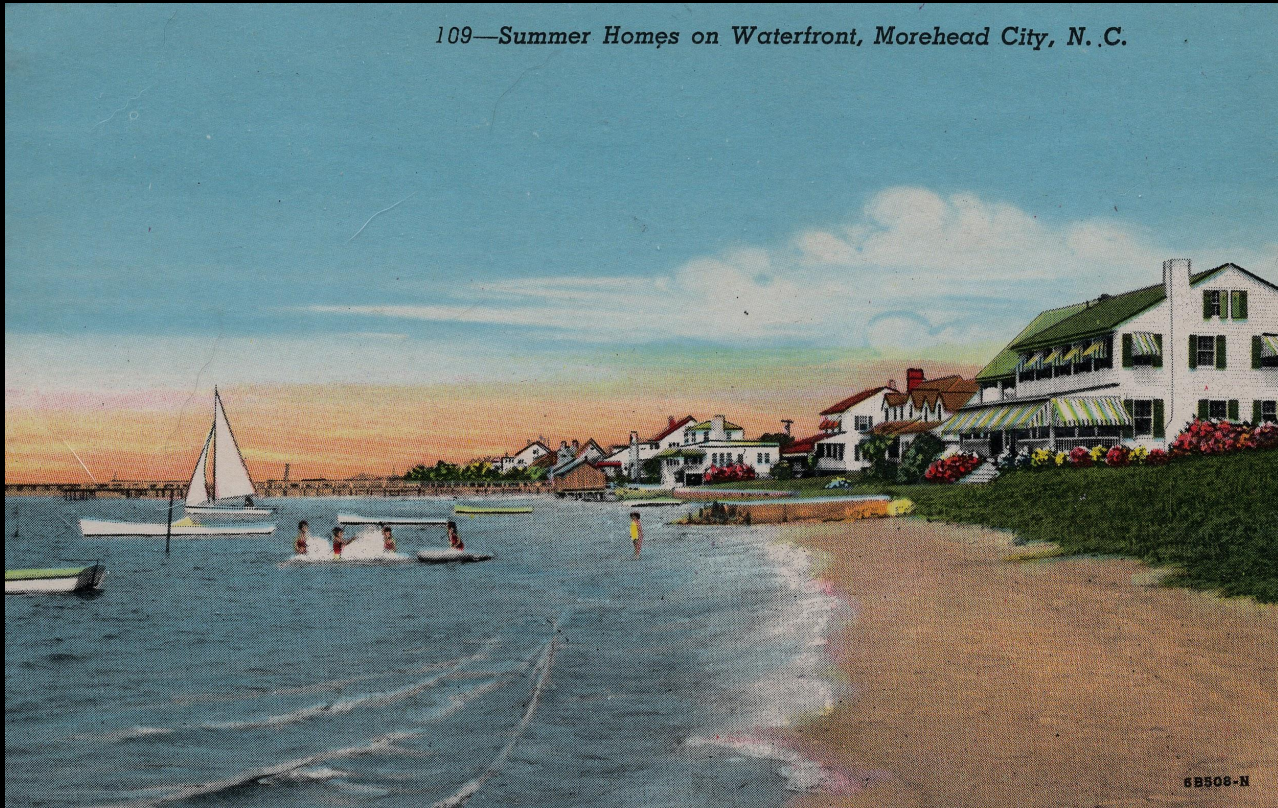
Aerial view of the Morehead City Bridge



“It will be the first instance of an entire new city on the Atlantic Coast being brought into market at once; and capitalists may never have again such an opportunity for good investment for a great city must and will be built at this place”

-John Motely Morehead

109—*Summer Homes on Waterfront, Morehead City, N. C.*



6B508-N

1953 Postcard,
Morehead City Bridge



3300 Arendell St I.
20 x 16 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



3300 Arendell St II.
20 x 16 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2020

ON THE BEATEN TRACK

tourism, art, and place LUCY R. LIPPARD



“Travel is the only context in which some people ever look around. If we spent half the energy looking at our own neighborhoods, we’d probably learn twice as much.”

-Lucy Lippard

ÉGYPTE MOYENNE.



Maxime Du Camp.

Gide & Baudry, Éditeurs.

Maxime Du Camp, 1850
Courtesy of Getty Images



Courtesy of The Week



Joel Sternfeld
2000-2012



320 NC Highway 58 II.
90 x 60 in
Phototex Print
2019



702 Atlantic Beach Causeway I.
20 x 24 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



309 E Fort Macon Rd
20 x 24 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



102 Atlantic Beach Causeway I.
11 x 14 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



1950's postcard
Bogue Inlet, Morehead City





2604 NC Highway 58
11 x 14 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



3300 Arendell St III.
20 x 24 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



314 Arendell St
1.5 x 3 in
Polaroid Collage
2018



3505 Arendell St
1.5 x 2 in
Polaroid Collage
2018



513 Evans St
3 x 3 in
Polaroid Collage
2018



Ocean Blvd Public Beach Access
24 x 30 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2019

NEWS: SHOWBOAT MOTEL

POSTED BY ADMIN | JUNE 19, 2019



The Showboat Motel property has been sold by Alan Shelor Real Estate! We should soon see a great improvement to the causeway as we come across the Atlantic Beach bridge.

Image courtesy of Alan
Shelor Real Estate



702 Atlantic Beach Causeway II.
20 x 24 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



320 NC Highway 58 I.
20 x 16 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



702 Atlantic Beach Causeway II.
24 x 30 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2019



3300 Arendell St IV.
20 x 24 in.
Archival Inkjet Print
2020



3300 Arendell St V.
60 x 42 in
Phototex Print
2020

